

THE
HISTORY
OF
TOM WHITE,
THE POSTILION.



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THE
HISTORY
OF
TOM WHITE,
THE POSTILION.

TOM WHITE was one of the best drivers of a Post-chaise on the Bath Road.—Tom was the son of an honest labourer at a little villiage in Wiltshire: he was an active industrious boy, and as soon as he was big enough, he left his father, who was burthened with a numerous family, and went to live with Farmer Hodges, a sober worthy man in the same village. He drove the waggon all the week; and on Sundays, though he was now grown up, the farmer required him to attend the Sunday School, carried on under the inspection of Doctor Shepherd, the worthy Vicar, and made him always read his Bible in the evening after he had served his beasts, and would have turned him out of his service if he had ever gone to the ale-house for his own pleasure.

Tom, by carrying some waggon loads of faggots to the Bear-inn at Devizes, soon made many acquaintances in the stable yard. He compared his own Carter's frock, and shoes thick set with nails, with the smart red jacket and tight boots of the Post-boys, and grew ashamed of his own homely dress: he was resolved to drive a chaise, to get money, and to see the world. Foolish fellow! he never considered, that though it is true, a waggoner works hard all the day, yet he gets a quiet evening, and undisturbed rest at night. However, as there must be chaise-boys as well as plough-boys, there was no great harm in the change. The evil company to which it exposed him, was the chief mischief. He left farmer Hodges, though not without sorrow at quitting so kind a master, and got himself hired at the Black Bear.

Notwithstanding the temptations to which he was now exposed, Tom's good education stood by him for some time. At first he was frightened to hear the oaths and wicked words which are too often uttered in a stable yard. However, though he thought it wrong, he had not the courage to reprove it; and the next step to being easy at seeing others sin, is to sin ourselves. By degrees he began to think

think it manly, and a mark of spirit in others to swear; though the force of good habits was so strong, that at first when he swore himself, it was with fear and in a low voice. But he was soon laughed out of his sheepishness, as they called it; and though he never became so prophane and blasphemous as some of his companions, (for he never swore in cool blood, or in mirth, as so many do,) yet he would too often use a dreadful bad word when he was in a passion with his horses. And here I cannot but drop a hint on the great folly as well as wickedness of being in a rage with poor beasts, who, not having the gift of reason, cannot be moved like human creatures, with all the wicked words that are said to them; but who, unhappily having the gift of feeling, suffer as much as human creatures can do, at the cruel and unnecessary beatings given them. He had been bred up to think that drunkenness was a great sin, for he never saw farmer Hodges drunk in his life, and where a farmer is sober, his men are less likely to drink, or if they do, the master can reprove them with a better grace.

Tom was not naturally fond of drink, yet for the sake of being thought merry company, and a hearty fellow, he often drank more than he ought. As he had

been used to go to church twice on a Sunday, while he lived with the farmer, who seldom used his horses on that day except to carry his wife to church behind him, Tom felt a little uneasy when he was sent the very first Sunday a long journey with a great family ; for I cannot conceal the truth that too many gentlefolks will travel when there is no necessity for it on a Sunday, and when Monday would answer the end just as well. This is a great grief to all good and sober people, both rich and poor. However, he kept his thoughts to himself, though he could not now and then help thinking how quietly things were going on at the farmer's, whose waggoner on a Sunday led as easy a life as if he had been a gentleman. But he soon lost all thoughts of this kind, and he did not know a Sunday from a Monday. Tom went on prosperously, as it is called, for three or four years, got plenty of money, but saved not a shilling. As soon as his horses were once in the stable, whoever would might see them fed for Tom.—He had other fish to fry.—Fives, cards, cudgel-playing, laying wagers and keeping loose company, each of which he at first disliked, and then practised, ran away with all his money and all his spare time ; and though he was generally in the way as soon as the horses were ready,

(because

because if there was no driving there was no pay,) yet he did not care whether the carriage was clean or the horses looked well, if the harness was whole, or the horses were shod. The certainty that the gains of to morrow would make up for the extravagance of to day, made him quite thoughtless and happy; for he was young, active, and healthy, and never foresaw that a rainy day might come, when he would want what he now squandered.

One day being a little flustered with liquor, as he was driving his return chaise through Brentford, he saw just before him another empty carriage, driven by one of his acquaintance: he whipped up his horses, resolving to outstrip the other, and swearing dreadfully he would be at the Red Lion first—for a pint—done, cried the other--a wager.--Both cut and spurred the poor beasts with the usual fury, as if their credit had been really at stake, or their lives had depended on this foolish contest. Tom's chaise had now got up to that of his rival, and they drove along side of each other with great fury and many imprecations. But in a narrow part, Tom's chaise being in the middle, with his antagonist on one side, and a cart driving against him on the other, the horses reared, the carriage got entangled, Tom

roared out a great oath to the other to stop, which he either could not, or would not do, but returned a horrid imprecation that he would win the wager if he was alive. Tom's horses took fright, and he was thrown to the ground with great violence. As soon as he could be got from under the wheels, he was taken up senseless; his leg was broken in two places, and his body much bruised. Some people whom the noise had brought together, put him into the post chaise, in which the waggoner kindly assisted, but the other driver seemed careless and indifferent, and drove off, observing with a brutal coolness, "I am sorry I have lost my pint; I should have beat him hollow, had it not been for this *little accident*." Some gentlemen who came out of the Inn, after reprimanding this savage, enquired who he was, wrote to inform his master, and got him discharged: resolving, that neither they, nor any of their friends would ever employ him, and he was long out of place.

Tom was taken to one of those excellent hospitals with which London abounds. His agonies were dreadful, his leg was set, and a high fever came on. As soon as he was left alone to reflect on his condition, his first thought was that he should die, and his horror was inconceivable.—

"Alas!"

"Alas!" said he, "what will become of my poor soul? I am cut off in the very commission of three great sins:—I was drunk, I was in a horrible passion, and I had oaths and blasphemies in my mouth."—He tried to pray, but he could not, his mind was all distraction, and he thought he was so very wicked that God could not forgive him: because, says he, "I have sinned against light and knowledge, and a sober education, and good examples, and I deserve nothing but punishment."—At length he grew light-headed, and there was little hope of his life. Whenever he came to his senses for a few minutes, he cried out, "O! that my old companions could now see me, surely they would take warning by my sad fate, and repent before it is too late."

By the blessing of God on the skill of the surgeon, and the care of the nurses, he however grew better in a few days. And here let me stop to remark, what a mercy it is that we live in a Christian country, where the poor, when sick, or lame, or wounded, are taken as much care of as any gentry; nay, in some respects more, because in hospitals and infirmaries there are more doctors and surgeons to attend, than most private gentlefolks can afford to have at their own houses,

whereas *there never was an hospital in the whole heathen world.* Blessed be God for this, amongst the thousand other excellent fruits of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION !

It was eight weeks before Tom could be taken out of bed. This was a happy affliction ; for this long sickness and solitude gave him time to reflect on his past life. He began seriously to hate those darling sins which had brought him to the brink of ruin. He could now pray fervently ; he confessed and lamented his iniquities with many tears, and began to hope that the mercies of God, through the merits of a Redeemer, might yet be extended to him on his sincere repentance. He resolved never more to return to the same evil courses, but he did not trust in his own strength, but prayed that God would give him grace for the future, as well as pardon for the past. He remembered, and was humbled at the thought, that he used to have short fits of repentance, and to form resolutions of amendment, in his wild and thoughtless days, and often when he had a bad headach after a drinking bout, or had lost his money at all fairs, he vowed never to drink or play again. But as soon as his head was well, and his pockets recruited, he forgot all his resolutions. And how should it be otherwise ?

otherwise? for he trusted in his own strength, he never prayed to God to strengthen him, nor ever avoided the next temptation.

The case was now different. Tom began to find that *his strength was perfect weakness*, and that he could do nothing without the Divine assistance, for which he prayed heartily and constantly. He sent home for his Bible and Prayer-book, which he had not opened for two years, and which had been given him when he left the Sunday School. He spent the chief part of his time in reading them, and thus derived great comfort, as well as great knowledge. The study of the Bible filled his heart with gratitude to God who had not cut him off in the midst of his sins, but given him time for repentance; and the agonies he had lately suffered with his broken leg increased his thankfulness, that he had escaped the more dreadful pain of eternal misery. And here let me remark, what encouragement this is for rich people to give away Bibles and good books, and not to lose all hope though for a time they see little or no good effect from it. According to all appearance, Tom's were never likely to do him any good, and yet his generous benefactor who had "cast his bread upon the waters, found it after
" many

“ many days,” for this Bible, which had lain untouched for years, was at last the means of his reformation.

As soon as he got well, and was discharged from the hospital, Tom began to think he must return to get his bread. At first he had some scruples about going back to his own employment; but, says he, sensibly enough, gentlesfolk must travel, travellers must have chaises, and chaises must have drivers; 'tis a very honest calling, and I don't know that goodness belongs to one sort of business more than another; and he who can be good in a state of great temptation, provided the calling be lawful, and the temptations are not of his own seeking, and he be diligent in prayer, may be better than another man for ought I know: and *all that belongs to us is to do our duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call us.* Tom had rubbed up his catechism at the hospital, and 'tis a pity that people don't look at their catechism sometimes when they are grown up; for it is full as good for men and women as it is for children: for though the questions contained in it are intended for children to *repeat*, yet the duties enjoined in it are intended for men and women and children to put in *practice*.

Tom

Tom now felt grieved that he was obliged to drive on Sundays. But people who are in earnest, and have their hearts in a thing, can find helps in all cases. As soon as he had set down his company at their stage, and had seen his horses fed, says Tom, " A man who takes care of his horses will generally think it right to let them rest an hour or two at least. In every town it is a chance but there may be a church open during part of that time. If the prayers should be over, I'll strive to be in time for the sermon; and if I dare not stay to the sermon, it is a chance but I may catch the prayers; it is worth trying for, however, and as I used to think nothing of making a push, for the sake of getting an hour to gamble, I need not grudge to take a little pains extraordinary to serve God. By this watchfulness he soon got to know the hours of service at all the towns on the road he travelled, and while the horses fed, Tom went to church; and it became a favourite proverb with him that *prayers and provender hinder no man's journey.*

At first his companions wanted to laugh and make sport of this—but when they saw that no lad on the road was up so early or worked so hard as Tom: When they saw no chaise so neat, no glasses so bright,

bright, no harness so tight, no driver so diligent, so clean, or so civil, they found he was no subject to make sport at. Tom indeed was very careful in looking after the linch pins, in never giving his horses too much water when they were hot; nor, whatever was his haste, would he ever gallop them up hill, strike them across the head, or when tired, cut and slash them in driving on the stones, as soon as he got into town, as some foolish fellows do. What helped to cure Tom of these bad practices, was that remark he met with in the Bible, that *a good man is merciful to his beast*. He was much moved on reading the Prophet Jonah, to observe what compassion the great God of heaven and earth had for poor beasts: for one of the reasons there given, why the Almighty was unwilling to destroy the great city of Nineveh was, *because there was much cattle in it*. After this, Tom never could bear to see a wanton stroke inflicted.

Tom soon grew rich for one in his station; for every gentleman on the road would be driven by no other lad if *careful Tom* was to be had. Being diligent, he got a great deal of money; and being frugal, he *spent* but little; and having no vices, he *wasted* none. He soon found out that there was some meaning in that text which
says,

says, that *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come*: for the same principles which make a man sober and honest, have also a natural tendency to make him healthy and rich; while a drunkard and a spend-thrift can hardly escape being sick, and a beggar in the end. Vice is the parent of misery here as well as hereafter.

After a few years Tom begged a holiday, and made a visit to his native village; his good character had got thither before him. He found his father was dead, but during his long illness Tom had supplied him with money, and by allowing him a trifle every week, he had the honest satisfaction of keeping him from the parish. Farmer Hodges was still living, but being grown old and infirm, he was desirous to retire from business. He retained a great regard for his old servant, Tom; and finding he was worth money, and knowing he knew something of country business, he offered to let him a small farm at an easy rate, and promised his assistance in the management for the first year, with the loan of a small sum of money, that he might set out with a pretty stock. Tom thanked him with tears in his eyes, went back and took a handsome leave of his master, who made him a present

present of a horse and cart, in acknowledgment of his long and faithful services; for, says he, "I have saved many horses by Tom's care and attention, and I could well afford to do the same by every servant who did the same by me; and should be a richer man at the end of every year by the same generosity, provided I could meet with just and faithful servants who deserved the same rewards."

Tom was soon settled in his new farm, and in less than a year had got every thing neat and decent about him. Farmer Hodges's long experience and friendly advice, joined to his own industry and hard labour, soon brought the farm to great perfection. The regularity, sobriety, peaceableness, and piety of his daily life, his constant attendance at Church twice every Sunday, and his decent and devout behaviour when there, soon recommended him to the notice of Doctor Shepherd who was still living, a pattern of zeal, activity, and benevolence to all parish priests. The Doctor soon began to hold up Tom, or as we must now more properly term him, Mr. Thomas White, to the imitation of the whole parish, and the frequent, and condescending conversation of this worthy Clergyman, contributed no less than his preaching

preaching to the improvement of his new parishioner.

Farmer White soon found out that a dairy could not be well carried on without a mistress, and began to think seriously of marrying; he prayed to God to direct him in so important a business. He knew that a tawdry, vain, dressy girl, was not likely to make good cheese and butter, and that a worldly and ungodly woman would make a sad wife and mistress of a family. He soon heard of a young woman of excellent character, who had been bred up by the vicar's lady, and still lived in the family as upper maid. She was prudent, sober, industrious and religious. Her neat, modest, and plain appearance at church, (for she was seldom seen any where else out of her master's family,) was an example to all persons in her station, and never failed to recommend her to strangers, even before they had an opportunity of knowing the goodness of her character. It was her character, however, which recommended her to farmer White. He knew that *favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised:*—"aye, and not only praised, but chosen to," says Farmer White, as he took down his hat from the nail on which it hung, in order to go and wait on
 Doctor

Doctor Shepherd, to break his mind and ask his consent; for he thought it would be a very unhandsome return for all the favours he was receiving from his Minister, to decoy away his faithful servant from her place without his consent.

This worthy gentleman, though sorry to lose so valuable a member of his little family, did not scruple a moment about parting with her, when he found it would be so greatly to her advantage; Tom was agreeably surprised to hear she had saved fifty pounds by her frugality. The Doctor married them himself, Farmer Hodges being present.

In the afternoon Doctor Shepherd condescended to call on Farmer and Mrs. White, to give a few words of advice on the new duties they had entered into; a common custom with him on these occasions. He often took an opportunity to drop, in the most kind and tender way, a hint on the great indecency of making marriages, christenings, and above all, funerals, days of riot and excess, as is too often the case in country villages. The expectation that the vicar might possibly drop in, in his walks, on these festivities, sometimes restrained excessive drinking, and improper conversation, even among those farmers who

who were not restrained by higher motives,
as farmer and Mrs. White were.

What the Doctor said was always in such a cheerful, good humoured way, that it was sure to increase the pleasure of the day, instead of damping it. Well, farmer, said he, and you my faithful Sarah, any other friend might recommend peace and agreement to you on your marriage; but I, on the contrary, recommend cares and strifes.* The company stared—but Sarah, who knew that her old master was a facetious gentleman, and always had some meaning behind, looked serious. “Cares and strifes, Sir, said the Farmer, what do you mean? I mean, said he, for the first, that your cares shall be who shall please God most, and your strifes, who shall serve him best, and do your duty most faithfully. Thus, all your cares and strifes being employed to the highest purposes, all petty cares and worldly strifes shall be at an end.

“Always remember, both of you, that “you have still a better friend than each “other.” The company stared again, and thought no woman could have so good a friend as her husband. “As you have chosen each other from the best motives, continued the Doctor, you have every reasonable

* See Dodd's Sayings.

reasonable ground to hope for happiness, but as this world is a foil in which troubles and misfortunes will spring up; troubles from which you cannot save one another, then remember, 'tis the best wisdom to go to that friend who is always near, always willing, and always able, to help you, and that friend is God.

“ Sir, said Farmer White, I humbly thank you for all your kind instructions, of which I shall now stand more in need than ever, as I shall have more duties to fulfil. I hope the remembrance of my past offences will keep me humble, and the sense of my remaining sin will keep me watchful. I set out in the world, Sir, with what is called a good natural disposition, but I soon found to my cost that without God's grace that will carry a man but a little way. A good temper is a good thing, but nothing but the fear of God can enable one to bear up against temptation, evil company, and evil passions. The misfortune of breaking my leg, as I then thought it, has proved the greatest blessing of my life. It shewed me my own weakness, Sir, the value of the Bible, and the goodness of God. How many of my brother drivers have I seen since that time, cut off in the prime of life by drinking, or by some sudden accident, while I have

not

not only been spared, but blessed and prospered. O Sir! it would be the joy of my heart, if some of my old comrades, good-natured, civil fellows, (whom I cant help loving) could see, as I have done, the danger of evil courses before it is too late. Though they may not hearken to you, Sir, or any other *Minister*, they may believe me, because I have been one of them, and I can speak from experience, of the great difference there is, even as to worldly comfort, between a life of sobriety and a life of sin. I could tell them, Sir, not as a thing I have read in a book, but as a truth I feel in my own heart, that to fear God and keep his commandments, will not only "bring a man peace at the last," but will make him happy *now*. And I will venture to say, Sir, that all the stocks, pillories, prisons, and gibbets in the land, though so very needful to keep bad men in order, yet will never restrain a good man from committing sin, half so much as that single text, "how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God."—Doctor Shepherd condescended to approve of what the Farmer had said, kindly shook him by the hand, and took his leave.

Thomas White had always been fond of singing, but he had for many years despised that vile trash which is too often sung in a
stable

stable-yard. One Sunday evening he heard his mistress at the Bear read some verses out of a book called the Spectator. He was so struck with the picture it contains of the great mercies of God, of which he had himself partaken so largely, that he took the liberty to ask her for these verses, and she being a very good natured woman, made her daughter write out for the postilion the following

HYMN ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

WHEN all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

O how shall words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare,
That glows within my ravish'd heart?
But thou can'st read it there.

Thy PROVIDENCE my life sustain'd,
And all my wants redrest,
When in the silent womb I lay,
And hung upon the breast.

To all my weak complaints and cries,
 Thy mercy lent an ear,
 Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learnt
 To form themselves in prayer.

Unnumber'd comforts to my soul
 Thy tender care bestow'd,
 Before my infant heart conceiv'd
 From whom those comforts flow'd.

When in the slipp'ry path of YOUTH
 With heedless steps I ran,
 Thine Arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,
 And led me up to MAN.

Thro' hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
 It gently clear'd my way ;
 And through the pleasing snares of vice,
 More to be fear'd than they.

When worn with sickness, oft hast THOU
 With health renew'd my face ;
 And when in sins and sorrow sunk,
 Reviv'd my soul with grace.

THY bounteous hand, with worldly bliss,
 Has made my cup run o'er ;
 And in a kind and faithful friend,
 Has doubl'd all my store.

Ten

Ten thousand thousand precions gifts,
My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a thankful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.

Thro' ev'ry period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue,
And after death, in distant worlds,
The glorious theme renew.

When nature fails, and day and night
Divide thy works no more,
My ever grateful heart, O LORD !
Thy mercy shall adore.

Thro' all ETERNITY to thee
A joyful song I'll raise,
For, O ! ETERNITY's too short
To utter all Thy Praise.

FINIS.

